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(*Phaseolus aureus*). Several varieties of sugar-cane (sweet sorghums) are planted on the boundaries of fields or between the other crops.

Njugo beans are ancient groundnuts which require a good deal of attention by way of mounding, restrictive taboos and careful pulling up, although they are very welcome as a change of diet. In this respect they resemble peanuts, which were popularised by the Shangana-Tongs not so long ago. These nuts sometimes answer well where other crops have failed; in certain years they may flourish while the cereals wither in the sun. Then you may hear people say, but it is only by way of joking among the Lovedu, that the Shangana-Tongs witches have called the cereals to undergo circumcision (*ku tha*). Some people in the valleys are half-inclined to believe the claims that the Shangana-Tongs make for their witches, because it is undoubtedly uncanny that, when the nuts succeed the cereals fail, and vice versa. But usually the claim is ascribed to the desire of these outcast people to assert their importance—the Lovedu know nothing of *inferiority complexes*, but they are shrewd judges of human nature.

Sesamum used to be popular in the valleys and is said to be an old crop of the Roka. But peanuts have ousted this wholesome, albeit very troublesome, crop. You will be told that the reason lies in the growing laziness of people; this is a reason given for the neglect of many other old crops, but in truth we have here merely a shift in the application of the available resources. A delightful commentary on some of the values of the society, though we must warn the reader not to judge them from our standpoint, is the name *lenowyo-vadimo*, 'sesamum of the gods'. It is a wild variety, unsuitable for human consumption, but good enough for the gods. It is not given to the gods, yet it reminds one of the sprouted cleusine merely mixed with water that is offered to the gods with the words, 'This is not water. Truly it is beer.'

There are other crops and the variety furnishes a well-balanced diet. But that is not considered to be the virtue of variety. A food is good if it fills. That is why they prefer their hard cakes of porridge to our watery oatmeal. They are inured to that feeling of fullness since the day of their birth, when Grandmother rammed porridge down their throats. But there is comfortable fullness and uncomfortable fullness—that after a good porridge meal and that after eating too much *njugo* bean. The stomach is not insensible to certain distinctions, though they are not our distinctions. Filling is not the only virtue of a food. Some foods relieve the monotony of the round of porridge and blackjacks, and some are tasty dishes or rare delicacies. But no one thinks of the virtues of a balanced diet, for nutritive and protective qualities of foods are not recognised. The old diet, simple though it might be from our point of view, was sufficiently varied to maintain people in good health; but it is not realised that, precisely because it was so simple, even a small change might eliminate essential ingredients. That change has not yet come among the Lovedu, but it is near at hand. Subsidiary crops are becoming less popular. You still see cowpeas, mung beans, water melons, even *dzavi*, sweet potatoes, and native beans. Yet, on the whole, what is most impressive is the growing reliance upon cereals and pumpkins, and the

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annually tilled, though the actual extent varies considerably according to the vagaries of the weather, the surplus in the granaries, the availability of implements and animals, and other factors. We do not think that in present conditions the absence of man-power in the towns is a material factor. On the contrary the man-power available is more than sufficient as long as present methods are employed. The introduction of the plough has liberated more energy than is absorbed by work among Europeans; the number of inactive men has increased rather than decreased. It is the shortage of animals and implements, rather than of men, that is most impressive. Even European labour and European ploughs and cattle are employed by the Natives; they come from the neighbouring farms and can do the work more economically than the Native with his inadequate resources. But it is not lack of human material, it is the impossibility of making the ploughs and animals go round, that necessitates such expedients. In the companies and partnerships, those who contribute the essentials, the cattle or the ploughs, are the dominant partners, and the others must often wait until late in the season before their needs can be attended to. The partnerships thus lead to tensions and strife, and hiring of services is becoming more popular. Yet on the whole the system works with remarkable smoothness. If it worked perfectly, the Natives would realize much more forcibly that it is not lack of industry that, as they think, is at the bottom of their troubles, but the inadequacy of the land and of their material resources.

Although animal husbandry ranks as a very poor second economic activity, it is still of sufficient importance to warrant a few remarks even in such a general account as this. Pastoral activities are not arduous; in the old days they were worthy of the metal of adult men who went armed to herd the cattle and supervised the milking. But to-day children herd and there are practically no cows to be milked. Cattle are individually owned both by men and women, but the kind of ownership, except in the case of some 15 per cent., is entirely different from what we understand by the word. For the vast majority of cattle are linked to the chain of *mayunalo* (bride-price) exchanges and as such the individual's rights over them are subject to many restrictions. The primary value to the Natives of cattle is not economic, but social; he regards cattle as food only in the last resort, though there is no taboo against killing them. Cattle are not killed as sacrifices. Ownership of cattle is not the chief or even a very important method of reckoning status. A man will complain, not because he has no cattle, but because he cannot brew beer to maintain his prestige. The dung of cattle is used for smearing, cattle that die are eaten, and cattle are killed in time of starvation so that the meat can be exchanged for mealies. But cattle are, generally speaking, much too large units of value to be of use in economic exchanges. Finally, the needs of cattle do not determine the routine of the day. They are taken out late, after the dew has dried and the herdboys have had their morning meal; and they come back almost unnoticed without disturbing the arrangements of the village. In a sense, however, their needs set limits to the harvesting season; crops which are not reaped by the beginning of July are practically at their mercy. Yet, despite all this, cattle are regarded

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friend, they return the compliment by giving you a goat; it is the 'walking-stick' of the old woman who brought the beer to her son-in-law, enabling her to go home safely. Goats are dedicated to the gods more frequently than any other animals. A goat is killed at a burial, and its unsalted flesh is eaten. People pay goats to their doctors; they exchange them for medicine. Their skins are still used for making skirts for women and cradles for their babies, whereas cattle hides have no use except for the thongs used in inspanning cattle. Goat's milk, which is never drunk by adults because of its unpleasant odour, is the food of herdboys and girls. All in all, goats play a not inconsiderable part in economic and goodwill exchanges, in legal adjustments, in ritual and religion.

By contrast, sheep, though in the bones of a diviner they represent the men of consequence and goats merely ordinary people, are of no importance whatever. They are very rarely seen on the hills and difficulties connected with dipping have reduced them to a negligible number in the valleys. Fowls are conspicuous everywhere, but only their meat, not their eggs, are eaten. They have recently been introduced by the Shangana-Tonga and even to-day, if found in the capital, are killed and thrown over the hedge. They are never, as among the Shangana-Tonga, used in religious rites. Donkeys, introduced in considerable numbers some thirty years ago, are used in ploughing and for transport, while pigs, also a recent acquisition, figure largely in trading transactions. Pork is not eaten except by men who have worked among Europeans, but the reason is that it nauseates, not so much that it is related to the totem of the tribe. Finally, hunting, as it is to-day, can be dismissed with a reference to the activities of herdboys, who shoot birds with wooden-headed arrows, use birdlime obtained from certain trees, and set various kinds of traps to catch rats, dwarf mongooses, and squirrels.

It is a different matter when we turn to the exploitation of the vegetation. The role that this source of subsistence plays is evident in a thousand ways. It is indeed difficult to give an adequate picture of the manner in which the vegetation enters into all aspects of life and culture. Perhaps, by way of illustration, we may take half a dozen names in order from an alphabetical list of over 500 plants—a small proportion of the flora—which we collected, and note merely a few of the ordinary, well-known uses:

Muvidividi (*Ekebergia capensis*). The wood, which is very white and hence much liked, is used for making spoons and bowls; being soft wood, it is also used for milk pails and door boards. To ensure that it will resist weevils to some extent, it is not cut when very young.

Muvidiso-eyalou (*Trichodesma zeylanicum*). In winter, when beer is slow to ferment, the leaves are put into the pot to accelerate the process. The roots, chewed or crushed, are put on wounds to relieve the pain and to heal.

Muvilo (*Vangueria floribunda*). Two varieties are distinguished. The primary use is medical and magical, e.g. a branch, first presented to termites and then medicated, is beaten on the temples for migraine; a medicated pole of *muvilo* is placed across gate entrances to keep out witches. For the latter reason, this wood may not be used as firewood; it would reveal the

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in the interest of a sister in the house established by her cattle that she may on occasion even exercise some control in her brother's choice of a wife. Dwagu wanted to marry Mabula, who was already married. His sister's husband then said, 'We shall not allow you to use my cattle to marry that woman. She will bring nothing but trouble.' If the wife obtained by means of the sister's cattle is badly treated by her husband, she may run to his sister, who will intervene on her behalf, or even in extreme cases arrange for her to live permanently away from her husband, who could then never claim a return of the bride-price from his wife's parents. Mahale, whom we knew well, had, under the influence of his second wife, chased away his chief wife, who ran to his sister. She advised the wife to make some pardon beer and take it as a peace-offering, but when he refused this his sister arranged for the woman to live with a widow in the village next door to her. Now, when Mahale's second wife quarrels and refuses to cook for him, he takes refuge with the wife he chased away till the storm is over!

The influence of a sister is reinforced by her religious position. At the annual harvest offering to the gods, it is always the eldest sister in the family who has to officiate. She is the one best able to intercede with the spirits. Any displeasure or secret grievance against her brother on her part may have the effect of stirring up the spirits to cause illness in his household, especially among his children (certain other relatives also have this power, but one hears most often of the sister). Hence it is said, 'The sister should roast pips; if she roasts the village [is angry] it will go up in flames' (*khadi e hadiga dithaga; yo hadiga motse u yo mu*). Sometimes a sister may threaten her brother, saying, 'If I complain, nothing will be good in your village.' On the death of the father, it is the eldest sister who, together with the father's brother, divides out the inheritance, and, at the only installation of a district head that we were able to witness, the emblems of office were handed over to the young heir's sister for him, though he was already in his twenties. In view of all these facts, a man's sister has great influence over him and may be called to remonstrate with him, more especially in matters affecting his own household when even his parents have been unsuccessful. But she has no right to interfere without just cause and, if she were to make needless trouble, her brother would very soon ask her to leave his village in peace.

Not all sisters play the role that has been ascribed in general terms to a man's sister. Though every sister is potentially priestess and guardian of her brother's household, in practice all these offices are seldom combined in one person. In religious ceremonies affecting the family as a whole, the eldest daughter of the chief wife would officiate; in case of illness, a man's uterine sister might be asked to officiate. If the sister whose cattle has been used is younger than her brother, she may have little influence as compared with her elder sister; furthermore, where the sister is a woman of no personality, her influence may be negligible. It is a man's uterine sisters that play the biggest part in his life, for in this, as in everything, the individual family is always asserting itself as against the larger, polygynous family group. A classificatory sister, one by the mother's sister or father's brother, or one by a wife of the father other

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they use usually two pieces of wood slightly concave on the inside in which a piece of straw or reed is temporarily inserted. The language being tone-bound, messages and songs can be understood when whistled. Not all ancestral spirits, but only those of the Lovedu proper and of some of the important groups, such as the Khaba and Narevi, are thought to be able to visit the earth as *zwidjoni*.

The most important feature of the drum cult was the beating of the sacred drums in an enclosure near the village, usually in the afternoon and evening on six successive days twice every year: in the spring just before the sowing and in winter after the harvest thanksgiving. The spring drumming was preceded by propitiation of the royal ancestors by means of a libation on their graves in Deja Forest, where the earlier chiefs lie buried. There was a special procession which no one was to see on pain of death, the Mulodoni River had to be crossed at a special spot called *Khijadu-eakulolo* (washing place of great people) and it is maintained by some that a black ox was also slaughtered. The district head at Deja, who was responsible for clearing a way to the graves, had to plant near the royal graves a little of every seed cultivated. The people would then see, it is said, which grew best and would plant much of that. The *gwanwa*, the beating of the sacred drums, 'was the chief thing that had the power of asking rain from the ancestors'. The sounding of the drums at harvest-time was a thanksgiving. The first harvest *gwanwa* after the circumcision took the form of an initiation, in which the neophytes were introduced into the drum ritual and the secret of *zwidjoni*, and received cuts on their faces as a sign that they had passed through it.

Though the sacred drums are still kept and the Ravethaja people are still called to repair the hut in which they are placed, the regular beating of *gwanwa* drums has fallen into disuse. The last *gwanwa* initiation held officially by the queen in the tribe was in 1892, just before the accession of the present queen. It is difficult to account for this lapse when among neighbouring tribes the cult is still fully carried out. Some say the reason lies in the ritual murders that are associated with the drums, but since it is an accepted principle that a sheep may satisfactorily take the place of a human being and, moreover, this difficulty must somehow have been overcome in other tribes, this reason does not appear good enough. Possibly the cult was introduced from the south and had not become sufficiently assimilated or taken deep enough root to survive the lethargy induced by European contact. Perhaps the rain-making powers of the queen herself made it largely unnecessary. It is not impossible that it will suddenly spring back to life, as did the *nyali* in 1938–9 after a lapse of over thirty years.

Though the queen herself now holds no *gwanwa*, the institution is not dead. Elements such as *zwidjoni* have taken permanent root and the queen has allowed a stranger, Rasekwalo, a rain doctor of the Amase tribe, who came to live on European-owned land under her jurisdiction, to hold a *gwanwa* with, of course, his own drums, and in 1929, when he came to ask that boys from the royal village should be allowed to attend the initiation, she gave her consent. He holds one *gwanwa* a year, receiving

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walk in single file. The bride (and sometimes her companions too) weeps, fearful of the new life full of responsibilities. They visit the boy's cattle-linked sister to be offered a goat and as a reminder that it is that sister who with her cattle has erected the new home. There may be a dumb show as the girls, marching up and down, display their final reluctance to give up the bride and, by contrast, the old women humorously mock the girls. At the gate of the boy's village they have to be carried in, and at last, as they humbly crawl to enter the hut, some one pours water on the roof and you hear the song, 'Little bride of ochre, seek shelter, you are raining wet'.

This is merely the general plan; there are many embellishments and many variations. But of some significance and worth mentioning as illustrative of the comprehensive nature of the ceremonial are the last few gifts just before the bride leaves home. There is a goat or ox. to 'lift' the bride from maiden to wife, for every important new step she takes may, in Lovedu phraseology, be made the occasion for asking something; another goat to 'take out the stamping block', symbolizing the transference of the bride's chief economically productive power; and still another to 'finish the complaints' of the bride's mother. Among neighbouring tribes there are similar gifts, but sometimes with different names and often, though having the same name, with different functions. A study of their reinterpretation by, and merging with the purposes of, each culture cannot be undertaken here. To two points we may, however, briefly refer. Occasionally among the Lovedu there are reciprocal feasts entailing the slaughter of a beast, first by the bride's and then by the bridegroom's family, and ending with an extra beast given by the latter to 'fill up the *mueyaalo*'. These feasts belong to a very different pattern, found, for instance, among the Urwa, where bride and bridegroom before the final acts are made to sit together on a mat, are offered advice and given presents. Secondly, and in strong contrast to many other tribes, the bride comes to her new home without any presents from her people. The troop of girls carry a twisted basket (*khiruduuma*) in which there are certain grains from the bride's village, but everything else except the grains, even her clothes, have been given her by the bridegroom. Her people give her nothing whatever to set up a new home. Household utensils she does not need, for she cooks in the hut and uses the pots and furniture of her mother-in-law until, with the coming of a younger daughter-in-law, she becomes independent and has her own cooking hut.

In a really orthodox marriage among the Lovedu there is a religious ceremony. It is preceded by the slaughter of the 'goat of killing' brought by the bridegroom; a leg is given to him and from the skin the bride's *thuyuna* (skirt) is made. Thereafter a prayer is offered to the gods on behalf of the girl: 'Here is the women. We let you know that she is leaving us. She is going to the place where she is married. Let her be happy there; let all she does there be right; let her be smeared with fat [have children]. We have no complaint against her [i.e. we shall not cause illness through being angry and so also you should not]; we have given her beads to help her so that she may make a good home where she

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is going.' It is, of course, an extempore prayer, not bound to any set words. After this rite there is no need to elope; it is ***ku ega***, to marry with proper rites, not *ku pala*, to run away surreptitiously. Yet the secret elopement by night is so interesting that it frequently follows, and in any case the slow journey of the troop of girls, who must be persuaded at every step, is always part of the ceremony.

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The final stage of the marriage ceremonial consists of several successive steps lasting a month or longer. Again a whole series of new gifts (*mawasa*) passes and new rites are enacted. From early morning until late at night the bride's companions are busy—cooking, stamping meal*ies*, bringing water for the inmates of the village to wash in, and in other ways. At night there are contests of riddles between the visiting girls and the boys and girls of the village; they are ordinary riddles (*dithai*), not those curious *dinyatho* that end the initiations, but the pattern of the institution is the same. There is, for instance, the *ku nusa* of the girls at every turn and their exaggerated politeness. Then, after a week, having fetched wood and distributed among themselves the gifts received, the bride's companions go home, crawling out of the village and accompanied some way by the boys. The bride is now alone and, still in her finery, she begins to do the household work. When she menstruates for the first time, she secretly 'flees the moon' (*ku shawa mwedi*), running to an old woman, who takes her back with beer of 'shunning the moon' and a goat is killed for her. This shunning of the menses is a minor detail in marriage ceremonial, with rules and observances, however, in which the virginity of the bride, the part played by the go-between, the division of the beer and meat, the reciprocal duties of the *nomukhulu* and the *nafukulu*, the one giving beer, the other returning a goat, are once more emphasized.

But all the rites and ceremonies are equally full of meaning, not only for the purpose in hand, but for the whole social structure. About three or four weeks after the marriage the bride goes to her home with the goat of 'pouring out her bridehood' (*ku shudla vumyeti*), and thereafter, according to ideal standards, the bridegroom may exercise full marital rights. This 'pouring out', with its associated observances, is still universally carried out, though the couple may already have received permission to cohabit. If the bridegroom migrates to town, as sometimes happens, before the home-bringing of the bride, the breach of orthodox rules, implied by the premature permission, is avoided. After a while the bride returns and brings the beer to 'open the way' for her mother. In the old days the boy's people then sent the *ku kukela* goat, the goat 'of asking permission' for the consummation of the marriage. At the stage when permission to cohabit is given, the couple are ritually mixed, the ceremony varying from mutual inoculation to common steaming under a blanket: it is a rite pregnant with meaning and with the associations it acquires as being a part of many other ritual occasions. The bride becomes an apprentice to her mother-in-law, there are avoidances and gifts (*mawasa*) to remove them and so, at every stage, the marriage ceremonial is cut to the configuration of the social structure, fitted into its foundations and walls, and made to merge into the smallest details of its ornamentation.

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XIV. THE PURSUIT OF HEALTH

(a) DIAGNOSING THE CAUSE OF ILLNESS

(b) THE RESIN POURS BEER TO APPEASE THE ANCESTORS

[facing A 209]

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calm, or soothe) the village. Cooling is an effective weapon against sorcery: when the doctor made Nagumbi vomit the foreign object introduced into his stomach by a sorcerer and causing the illness *Mulovo* (thing caused to be eaten) he ordered it to be buried in a wet place and water to be squirted (*ho phasa*) over it with an injunction to the disease to return to its sender. Even the gods must be kept cool, for if hot they stand up (*no ema*), are discontented, and make trouble; hence the black river stone in many shrines and perhaps also the river stones in the drums. 'To cool' might be translated by our phrases, to calm, to free from agitation, to soothe, to appease, or, more generally, to put right.

The great *role of sex* in medical practice can only be briefly dealt with. Many illnesses and even death are attributed to sexual intercourse in certain circumstances or to some supposed abnormality in the sexual organs. Some men and women are believed to have a small thick hair (*lowoya*) in their genitals which enters the stomach of any one with whom they cohabit and there pecks (*ho goba*). The *lowoya* from a man will cause the woman he impregnates to die in childbirth, and the *lowoya* of a woman kills all her lovers. Phedudi, whose wife's death was attributed to *lowoya*, found some difficulty in re-marrying, and the parents of the girl whose love overcame her fear insisted on his submitting to curative treatment before the marriage. But usually there is merely rumour that So-and-so has *lowoya* and no definite precautions are taken. Men avoid intercourse with a menstruating woman, not because of danger to her, but because, as even educated men in the towns believe, they are liable to become afflicted with swollen penis or urethritis. *Mafo*, swelling of the whole body, is contracted if one, without previous steaming and mutual inoculation, cohabits with one's deceased brother's wife; but a stranger, though liable to get ill, does not contract *mafo*, because it is chiefly due to the 'dirt' of one's brother.

To *give or transmit sye vendi*, the woman's disease, and the most dreaded of all diseases, more than 30 per cent. of the deaths of men during our stay among the Lovedu was attributed. It is believed to be contracted by a man if, without previous precautionary treatment, he has sexual intercourse with a woman who has had a miscarriage or abortion or whose child has died before weaning. So fatal is it regarded to be that, unless cured immediately, the patient's chances of getting well are seriously impaired by the weight of subtle mass suggestion and his complete surrender to the inevitable. One illustration, the death of an educated man and a close friend of ours, will suffice. He had an irritating cough which every one believed to be *give*, but one European doctor found nothing wrong, while another, to whom we explained our anxiety, diagnosed myocardiosis, which would readily respond to hospital treatment. Our friend had no faith in the diagnosis and refused to go to hospital; he resorted to one Native doctor after another and vainly endeavoured to get 'medicine' from the girl he suspected. He became more and more emaciated, resigned himself to his fate and within a month after examination by the second European doctor he was dead.

Give is not syphilis nor a sexual disease. Its main symptom is coughing, but any illness, even if there is hardly any cough, may be diagnosed as

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CHAPTER XIII

THE ROLE OF THE ANCESTORS

Ancestral cult-ism and complexism and rites to appease them—the universe of the ancestors a replica of the everyday world—relations of magic, morality, and religion—possession by spirits as a religious and socio-psychological phenomenon.

Nature spirits and hero-gods have no place in the Lovedu scheme of things. There is, however, Khuzwane, the creator, who made all things, including men, and left his footprints on certain rocks in the north when these rocks were new and soft. But no one knows what has happened to him and no one ever thinks of him. The gods of the Lovedu are their ancestors, deceased fathers and mothers who guard one in death as they did in life. Each family has its own ancestors, and religious observances are thus peculiarly a family concern.

Ancestors have various attributes. They are one's protectors and no harm can befall one unless they, the ancestors, are neglectful. Witches, powerful as they are, can neither enter the village nor cause sickness without their connivance; hence the procedure in divination, even in the clearest cases of witchcraft, of inquiring whether the spirits should be appeased. Disease cannot enter nor epidemics break out if only the ancestors are watchful enough and well-disposed. Again and again one finds this idea expressed in prayers; 'Protect us from epidemics [winds]', they say; while the queen in a prayer at her harvest ceremony put it even more positively: 'As regards life, we have been very well, but now we are being killed by that epidemic which you have allowed to come', referring to smallpox. There can be no success without the co-operation of the ancestors. Medicine cannot help nor doctors heal if the ancestors are not with one. This idea, reminiscent of our 'By the will of God', is expressed in the phrase, 'We do not say our doctor, [will heal]; we say *our doctor and the ancestors*'. It appears also in a prayer we heard on behalf of an absent son working in town, when a goat, dedicated to his grandmother (father's mother), who had made him ill two years before, was being given the new coat: 'Here is the child; here he is, mother. We ask that you let him be happy and cool (give him health). Tell all the other spirits [certain names mentioned], and we who remain, *we say our thing with the gods*.'

The phrase '*vadimo lalowe*' (spirits, sleep) which rounds off so many prayers, and the constant fear of waking up (*ku dzoma*) the ancestors, causing them to stand (*ku ema*) and cause trouble, appear at first as a peculiar contradiction, as though people do not wish their gods to be watchful. The term *lala* is, however, idiomatic, expressing peace, things being as they should be, as in the phrase, '*Ho va malao; shago la lala*' (There was order; the country slept), implying that the rains were good and all was well; while *ku dzoma* in this sense means stirring to anger rather than waking up from sleep.

The ancestors are responsible for the fertility of the crops. True, nothing could grow without rain, for which the queen is responsible and

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769 which royal ancestors only can withhold; differences in the harvest
24 between one area and another are often attributed to fights between the
782 witches of the two areas, and even variations in yield between one man's
field and his neighbour's may be due to witchcraft. Yet one finds in
prayers many a request for a good harvest, even though there are no
special ceremonies devoted to this end. A man pouring a libation for a
sick child said among other things, 'Give us corn; when we plough let
us also reap. Why are you stinting us?' And it is significant that the only
regular religious observance in the harvest offering of beer made of each
year's new corn in villages where there are shrines or dedicated animals.
When any one dies, there is thought to be danger that the fertility of the
crops will depart with him or her. Hence, when a gourd of seeds of every
kind is placed in the grave together with a firebrand and calabash of water
for the journey, some of the seeds are scattered over the body with the
words, 'Do not depart with all the corn and seeds,' and very often the
grain belonging to the deceased is treated with medicine in order that it
may remain fertile.

769 Above all, the ancestors complain, a fact which lies at the basis of
782 Lovedu religion, for by far the greater proportion of religious rites are
those performed in response to ancestral complaints. One might at first
think it strange that the gods, in life just ordinary, well-disposed people,
should in death be so liable to bring trouble upon their kin. Sometimes
it is thought to be a sign of love: when Masilu's grandmother had made
him ill because she wanted a goat dedicated to her, his mother said, 'No
wonder his *gogo* seized him. She was always so fond of him.' But chiefly
it is the nature of ancestors to complain; as the Lovedu phrase it, 'When
people sleep (*i.e.* are dead), they ought to complain' (*Ha vatlu va khi
lala fase va swanela ku yelela*). When there is illness, they are, as it is
phrased, 'seen in the divining bones'; it is they who sometimes 'hold' the
woman experiencing difficult childbirth, and sometimes, but far less than
among the Nguni, their complaints cause dreams. Our close friend
887 Walter, coming to seek work in Johannesburg, dreamt disturbing dreams
of his dead father, who appeared to say that he was needed at home. He
thereupon returned home and, when he arrived, his mother took him to
a doctor, whose bones declared that the dead father was annoyed at not
having been told of the journey to town and had to be appeased (*ku
phasa*). Walter was well educated, but he had failed in his last examination
and felt doubly frustrated. He had great ambitions of reforming the
political system of the tribe, from which his education had divorced him,
and in town he was dissatisfied that nothing was open to him but the
unskilled work of his uneducated compatriots.

769 An ancestor may complain about the way he has been buried, and if he
782 has died far from home, may demand to be 'brought back home' in a
778 ceremony in which, besides the dedication of a beast or goat, a goat is
killed and eaten, its bones being buried as though it were a person. But
this 'bringing home', involving the making of a shrine, applies only to
those dying at a distance and does not resemble the 'bringing home' of
the Zulu, among whom it is part of death ceremonial. At times the gods
complain of neglect. But in the majority of cases no definite reason for

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the complaint is either given or required; and frequently no special spirit is mentioned. It is enough to know the cause of the trouble and what rites are necessary to placate the gods. Even complaints of neglect are usually put positively: 'He complains that you should give him (his shrine) a libation'. The ancestors desire mainly to be remembered: they want their beads worn, their name revived, a beast or goat dedicated to and named after them. They also like to be told about journeys undertaken or marriages, in much the same way as the living, and to be approached with a libation. Yet, unlike the Nguni, they never complain of being hungry; nor are the gods said to drink the libation or even its spiritual counterpart, but are merely pleased to be given their due. There is no such thing as resting secure because you have done all that is necessary for the gods; there is always some ancestor who can cause trouble, and it is best to wait and see what is wanted. Moreover, the ancestors are wayward; there is no knowing what they may desire. Mambeuli asked to be buried at Khikhuti, but after his death he caused sickness, saying, 'Why did you bury me in the valley in the sun' (instead of in the ancestral grove), and a black sheep had to be sacrificed on his grave. Similarly, Mulogwane, brother of the queen, who in 1934 became a Christian on his death-bed, withheld rain in 1935 because they had buried him in a Christian cemetery. Religious rites among the Lovedu tend, therefore, to be addressed to those spirits that cause trouble and in the absence of illness there may be no rites at all.

Certain objects which were once in the possession of the ancestors are used in religious ceremonial and are thought to have special powers of protection and healing. These objects, consisting of ancient beads of glass or native-worked iron or copper, native-wrought assegais, hoes, axes, iron rods with spiked heads, are handed down in the family and carefully cherished. Very often when a daughter leaves to be married, she is given a few beads to take with her for use when she is ill. Such charms are called *thugula*. Illness caused by an ancestor can generally be cured by a ceremony known as *ku phasa*: a mixture of ground grain and water is poured over beads or other *thugula* objects in the presence of the patient while a prayer, scolding the spirits and asking for health, is made. The beads are then worn by the patient till he recovers. After *ku phasa* on beads for any one, he may wear them at any time with protective results, and small children generally wear many old beads. Masseriba called hers 'my hospital' (*spitala aa ga*) to illustrate their powers to us in European idiom. Patsere says, if he does not wear the crocodile bone that was his father's, he gets ill or dreams much of dead people. Association with the ancestors, not anything inherent in these objects, gives them their powers, for we have seen an old Boer gun brought out as a *thugula* at an offering. Yet for a charm to heal it is not essential that it should have been in the possession either of the complaining ancestor himself or of his family. Sometimes the gods, through the dice, mention beads or other objects not known in the family at all. It is then concluded that they have been lost and steps are taken to procure them from some one else or from the queen, who has many. Then when they pray, it will be mentioned: 'We are replacing the lost bead.'

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769 Offerings may be poured on the ground or on *thugula* objects. Some-
782 times, however, the ancestors desire a shrine or a dedicated animal. The
825 queen herself and some others have dedicated cattle, male or female, according to the spirit represented; a few families have sheep, while the majority have goats. Fowls are neither dedicated nor killed for the gods. But we have one instance of a dedicated snake, that in the Relela family, to which in 1939, at their burial grounds in the depths of the forest, libations were offered when the *vyali* initiation began in that district; the conception is wholly alien to the Lovedu, though the Relela have been so long linked with, as to be indistinguishable from, them; and the snake, said to whistle, is described as like that dreaded monster, the 'mountain snake' which is often thought of as a mamba but strikes terror like the omen it is. The use of these different animals is traditional in, and bears no relation to the wealth of, the families concerned; some have a dedicated animal, others merely a shrine, while many have both. The dedicated animal receives the name of an ancestor, father or grandfather in the case of the head of the lineage, or of any complaining spirit that has demanded such *thugula*, and it is believed that his spirit (*mzya*) has entered into it. Some dedicated animals are credited with abnormal powers: Mamujaji's agitation one day, while being driven to the dip, correctly presaged unpleasantness with the dip inspector; Malegudu is the fiercest bull in the land, like the warrior whom he represents. Though some people unceremoniously pour beer-offerings down the throat of dedicated animals, it is generally claimed that, unlike ordinary animals, they readily drink beer, but the claim is contradicted by the mealie-leaves put over the beer to coax the animal to drink. In 1938, when Malegudu, called from the herd to drink the harvest beer, remained immovable, every one was afraid to approach him, but it was considered sufficient to throw the beer over him from a distance, so that by licking himself he might partake of the offering.

778 Shrines, which are to be found generally on the left-hand side of the entrance to the sleeping hut of the chief wife, vary in appearance and contents. A shrine may consist of a small mound of earth, containing the
[824] bones of a sacrificial goat; it may be a sacred plant or tree, usually *tjitjigwani* (*Hypoxis villosa*) or *leɔmɛ* (*Hæmanthus sp.*) and *mutabu* (*Ficus capensis*), a black river stone, a long stick, or even a piece of a certain kind of ant heap (*khithoni*). The queen's own shrine is a mound under which are buried the bones of a goat slaughtered some twenty years ago when it was set up. Mashishimali's shrine contains no bones, but consists of a *tjitjigwani* lily and a river stone, both visible above ground. Ramatiti has three shrines and one dedicated goat, all of which have arisen out of illness caused by ancestral complaints. Of the first, the shrine of his father, nothing is visible above ground; it consists of a buried piece of ant-heap, used instead of a goat because Ramatiti is not the chief son, who should have the dedicated animal, and a black river stone which keeps the spirit cool and appeased (lying down), as well as the three plant substances
[824] *mufira*, *lesogo* (*Alipedia sp.?*), *vulevaja*, which are placed in most shrines to make the ancestors 'forget'. The other two are mounds containing the bones and heads of goats, one representing his mother, the other, like the live goat, his mother's brother, his wife's father.

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In the actual working religion of the Lovedu the commonest and most conspicuous rite is *hu phasa*, consisting of a prayer and the pouring on to earth or *thugula* of a mixture of ground, sprouted grain and water, a mixture colloquially referred to as *mufaswa lestlo* (the rinser of the winnowing basket). More rarely *hu phasa* is merely spitting out water in the courtyard to the accompaniment of such prayer. There is no formulated distinction in principle between the two forms; the Lovedu say that the dice decide which is to be used. We found water squirted in illness caused by complaints of the living; in some cases of difficult birth; where in the initiation of a possessed woman the spirit was begged to manifest itself; and in one exceptional instance water was squirted on the face of a corpse addressed in prayer before it was buried (usually the corpse is merely addressed when the grains are put into the grave). The efficacy of *hu phasa*, which is also used magically to render witchcraft ineffectual, appears to lie in its 'cooling' effect. *Hu phasa* is performed in connexion with a large number of cases of illness and bad luck and is the recognized approach in asking for blessings on a journey or an undertaking. Hardly a week passes without some one in the neighbourhood having to *phasa*, and generally the prayer in these cases takes the form of a 'scolding' (*hu rohasa*), in which the spirits are asked why they are causing illness and told to be satisfied. One does not *phasa* without also using charms in the mixture to make the spirits forget, and the officiator may be male or female, whomsoever the dice have indicated. Rites of thanksgiving, except for the customary harvest beer, are almost unknown. We came upon such a rite only once when the bachelor brother of Madinji returned home after an absence in town of thirty years and she performed *hu phasa* in the presence of the family, saying, 'Spirits of Mambeuli, this is one of your fowls. We thought he was lost; now he is back. Keep him as you have kept the rest of us. If he goes away, let him soon remember and long for his home.'

The only regular offering is the annual harvest beer given to dedicated animals and shrines, though even this may be neglected: the village may be moved without the shrine, or the dedicated animal die without being replaced. We ourselves witnessed the setting up of a shrine and dedicated sheep after twenty years' neglect in the chief house of Sedena. Much more formal than ordinary rites of *hu phasa* is the harvest offering, which may take place any time between July and November, for there is here no rule that the queen should take precedence. The officiator is a woman where possible, the *khadi*, who is specially called to come, and real beer, called *muphaba* and made of eleusine, is prepared for the ceremony. If eleusine is not available, red kaffir corn (*makhaha*) may be used, but no other grain is acceptable to the spirits. In its preparation, which is in the hands of old women or girls below the age of puberty, care must be taken that the eleusine is stamped, not ground on the grindstone, and that none of it is tasted before the gods have been given some. Ordinary beer is tasted to see if it is ready, but *muphaba* is smelt or tested by stirring with a twirler. Though the married women of the village play no part in the religious rites on such occasions, it is the duty of the chief wife in whose courtyard the ceremony will take place to smear with dung the place

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where they will pour and to carry the beer in the *khirudwana* basket used in honour of the gods. The occasion is one of joy. The women have already in all likelihood sung *lesugu* songs special to the occasion amid joyous trillings while preparing the beer and, since in addition to the special beer of the gods much ordinary beer will have been prepared, a wide circle of relatives, including those of the wives, will have been invited.

When the queen held her *thugula* ceremony in August, 1938, Didi was despatched at eight o'clock in the morning to fetch home Magovo, the cow dedicated to the queen's mother, for the harvest giving should take place fairly early in the day, though in practice the rule is often observed in the breach and we have seen ceremonies take place after midday. As it is not easy to drive home one cow of a herd, all were driven and put into the *khɔrɔ* where every one had gathered. When Magovo's hind legs had been tied, the chief wife of Mulogwane, deceased brother of the chief to whose family the queen is *khadi*, appeared carrying in a basket a calabash of beer and the queen's mother's beads (*mudala*, the well-known 'beads of the water'). Pouring some of the beer in a wooden platter, she handed it to the queen, who, holding the beads in her hands, placed it before Magovo with the words, 'Here is beer, Magovo of Muhale (one of the earliest kings), beer of the new corn. We say, Stop this epidemic (winds) to which you have exposed us. Here, too, are your beads. We see neither people (subjects) nor riches; we see only that poverty which you have left for us.' The cow sipped a little of the beer, whereupon all prostrated themselves in greeting (*hu lɔsha*), while one or two women rent the air with their joyous trillings. Sometimes (but it was omitted on this occasion) the beads are placed round the neck of the cow and left there for the whole day.

The dedicated cow having been untied, all now repaired to the courtyard of the chief wife of Mulogwane, where they sat round the shrine, the queen and sons and daughters near by, wives further away, while the small children were made to kneel on the lower side of the shrine, hands together and palms up. Pouring out beer on the mound, the queen said a prayer similar to the previous one, adding that the gods must tell one another and not leave any one out. Then, drinking a little herself, she placed the calabash on the ground for the next person to take up and drink. Each one in turn placed the gourd on the ground for the next to take up, till all the relatives had drunk, when it was returned to the queen. She drank once more, saying, 'He who gives to the gods must not remain hungry,' and laid the calabash upside down on the mound. The small children lapped up the beer from the ground, and trilling and *hu lɔsha* marked the end of the ceremony.

Now pots of beer for the crowd that had gathered were brought out and general drinking began. After a while the men took out the drums and began dancing an old dance, the *matagwa*. Thereafter the women began the sacred *lesugu* songs, to which men and women danced in a ring in the courtyard of the chief wife. The queen herself beat the big drum. It was now near sunset. Suddenly a wail like the bleating of a sheep was heard; another, then another, in the direction of the bush behind the

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village. It was the *zwidjani*, ancestral spirits come to join in the joy and revelry of the living. They opened the next song and joined in the singing of the women, all in the whistling language which people make out by its tone. Later more beer was brought out and when the *zwidjani* began a new song no one took any notice. 'If you are drinking beer, what are we to drink', came the wails of the *zwidjani* and a pot of beer was brought to the bush by councillors. Dancing and singing continued till the small hours of the morning, when the sounds of the *zwidjani* disappeared in the direction of Maulwi, the burial grove of the dead queens, and the revellers, happy and drunk from beer of the *thugula*, retired to bed. The spirits visit only important members of the royal group and a few other families, but beyond this there are no differences between the harvest giving of the queen and that of other people.

Ritual killings of all kinds are insignificant by contrast with the beer offering. There are, first, killings specially for the ancestors, but they are so rare that many people have never seen them. Secondly, there are occasions when the killings, clearly ritual, are not thought of as an offering or sacrifice, because nothing is given to the ancestors. And, thirdly, there are killings, not associated with ancestors or religion, in which small pieces of meat may nevertheless be set aside to 'tell' (*hu suma*) the gods of some event or to propitiate them. *Hu suma* is a conception somewhat different from our 'offer' or 'give'; it has two connotations as used in ordinary life: it is either merely to inform a superior or, by extension of this idea, to send him a share of something good one has, such as a leg of an animal slaughtered or a calabash of the beer one has brewed. In approaching the gods, sometimes one and sometimes the other conception is uppermost.

The killing which most clearly contains the conception of an offering and the primary purpose of which is propitiation of the gods is the slaughter of a black sheep for rain at the grave of a royal ancestor: the victim is immolated, small pieces of meat cut from all parts of it are set aside for the gods, and all the bones are collected and buried in the grave, together with the stomach contents. Equally stressed, however, is the eating of the meat without salt by the assembled crowd. At the installation of a district head, a beast, referred to as a *thugula*, is killed and, in so far as it is killed in a special manner and morsels of meat set aside for the gods to be cooked and later eaten without salt by children below the age of puberty, it is the vicarious submission of a gift to the ancestors. But the major portion of meat is not ritually eaten nor are the bones collected, for a hind leg is sent to the queen. So little is the 'goat of killing' in marriage ceremonial regarded as an offering or sacrifice that we sought for it in vain in the context of a killing for the ancestors. Yet pieces of meat are laid on the shrine and a prayer offered, though the rest of the meat is not ritually eaten nor are the bones kept. Still further removed from an offering is the goat killed on a death to provide a skin for covering the body: its meat is eaten without salt, and all who partake of it must sleep in the hut of the deceased, but nothing is given to the ancestors and no prayer is offered. On the other hand, though the *lebpo* doctor, when killing a goat to treat a patient, sets aside pieces of meat

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for his ancestors, this killing, primarily medical in purpose, is not to propitiate and has no religious significance.

An interesting though unusual killing among the Lovedu is the 'bringing home' of a spirit. Maborɔmɔ, an uninherited widow living with her three children in a village of relatives, had had much illness in the family which, after consultation with many doctors, was attributed to her husband's brother Pheduli. Pheduli had been stabbed to death in a Johannesburg compound and was now complaining, 'I want to be brought home with a head of cattle.' All his relatives were asked to be present and contribute their share of corn, because 'We are placing a beast to be Pheduli'. On the day of the ceremony a young black and white bull-calf was caught and held, and, when beer (*muphaba*) was poured down its throat, the *khadi* uttered a prayer, saying, 'Drink and tell all the other spirits these matters.' Then they repaired with the same calabash to the courtyard, where all the children were called to sit near: the *khadi*, praying for health, poured the beer on a spear, battle-axe, and horn which had belonged to Pheduli, and the children drank what was left in the calabash, each one placing it in turn on the ground. The doctor, who, supervising his side of the ceremony, had been busy in a hut preparing his medicines, now came out and asked that the dedicated calf again be caught. Mixing a powder, said to consist of *muftra* and other medicines to make spirits forget, he told the *khadi* to smear it on some of the hairs at the end of the tail and to tie a knot. He himself then smeared the whole tail and body. Repairing to the courtyard where the *thugula* objects still lay, the doctor took out a bag of powder, which he shook up to 'smoke' the objects in its dust. Then he dug a hole where the beer had been poured.

Meanwhile the meat of a goat which had been killed was cooking in a pot. Before the killing (which we did not witness), medicine, we were told, had been smeared on the goat while the doctor uttered the words, 'Sleep, sleep here, and look after your people.' The meat was eaten without salt by the relatives as well as a few others who were present and the bones carefully collected. A dog seized hold of one and was chased by all till the bone was retrieved. Having placed the bones in the hole, the doctor inquired, 'In which direction do the Lovedu look when buried?' The *khadi* pointed to the north. Then, taking the head of the goat, he placed it facing north on top of the bones and said, 'We people all look in that direction.' He took out medicine, which he gave to the *khadi* to pour on the bones, smoked them with his powder, and ordered that the hole be filled with the stomach contents mixed with earth. The *khadi* then beat down the earth and made a small mound. Dancing and the singing of *lesugu* songs now began and continued all night till at dawn the *khadi* took some water and squirted (*hu phasa*) thrice, saying, 'As for us, we are going, we are returning home. And you, may you remain in peace.' In the beer that was provided for this festive occasion was put some medicine, 'the powder of death', generally used after a death, lest people *khuma*; for the burial of the goat symbolizes the burial and bringing home of their ancestor, just as the dedicated goat symbolizes the immortality of his spirit.

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girls below the age of puberty are sent to draw water for the *mufugo* which the queen's rain-doctor prepares for the occasion, and after a day or two, when the medicine froths up (*hu pukula*), boys are sent with a horn of *mufugo* and a brush of *khadi* creeper (*Adenia gumnifera*) to every village in the land. First they heat medicine on the fire of the men's courtyard and thereafter on the threshold and hearth of every hut. The ashes are cleared away by an old woman, for so dangerous is the medicine used that any man, woman, or child entering the hut before it has been smeared with dung will *khuma* and be unable to have children. A new fire is kindled in the men's courtyard, whence each woman fetches a brand for her own hut, for it is taboo to kindle a fire from any other. In return for her firebrand, each woman gives the men stamped mealies or groundnuts, which they eat in the *khɔrɔ*. Each married man in turn must give something to the boys who have brought *mufugo*, usually 1*s*. or a fowl (in the old days an arrow or mealies), but often also tobacco or other gifts for, as '*mufugo* does not choose' (*mufugo a u khɛ̀the*), anything may be given. Each boy must give 1*s*. or a fowl to the keeper of *mufugo*, keeping the rest as a reward for his labours. It is taboo to work in the fields on the day after *mufugo*. In 1927 some boys, too lazy to fetch the medicine, took matters into their own hands and made a mixture of ash and water, which they used in their rounds. They were discovered and made to pay five head of cattle each and the ceremony had to be performed again.

When the divining bones diagnose drought as due to ancestors, steps have to be taken for a sacrifice at an ancestral grave. Any one of the close relatives of the queen can cause drought: sometimes it is the queen's mother Leakhali, buried at Khada; sometimes it is Mugɔdɔ's sister, buried at Mudzinoni; in 1925–6 it was Mulogwane, the queen's brother, who complained that he was buried in the Christian cemetery, instead of in the shade of the forest. A sacrifice for rain will take place only after it has become clear that, in spite of steps taken to *lova* the queen by means of money or dancing, she fails by her ordinary methods to cause the rain to fall.

January, 1938, was hot and dry. Several headmen had been to *lova*, but no rain fell. Important district heads and councillors thus began to 'travel about, having the bones thrown', to discover the cause, while the queen herself also sent messengers to various well-known diviners. The reply came, 'Seek ye a black sheep. Go with it to show your care for the spirits and you shall see that it will rain nicely.' As is so often the case, no indication was given of the cause of their complaint; the suggestion as to the practical measures to be taken and the identity of the troublesome spirits were quite sufficient. The queen, however, remained inactive; it was not for her to take the initiative till her people humbly begged her to do so. On February 11th three of the most important men at the capital approached her, saying, 'People are crying. Help us.' Thereupon she impatiently replied, 'People tire me. The year was well established, but they have "weakened" (*hu figchila*) it. They want me to be troubled.' She implied that she had safeguarded the year, but that the people themselves, by breaking rain taboos and by their evil works and witchcraft, had undermined that safeguard. When the councillors continued

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or back of the hut, as among Zulu–Xhosa, but a shrine in the courtyard of the chief hut. Lowveld shrines vary from family to family but are easily recognizable. A shrine may consist of a mound of earth, a stick and river pebble, a spot where a thithikwane lily has been planted or a long stick planted in the earth like the Shangana–Tonga shrine. The contents of these shrines also vary within a general pattern: the Lobedu royal family place the bones of a sacrificial goat or ox in the mound; other families bury two black river pebbles and a piece of a special kind of antheap, and there are many further variations. Always there are, in addition, charms given by the doctor to prevent the ancestors from causing trouble. Instead of a shrine, or even along with it, one may find a beast or goat dedicated to the ancestors, usually bearing the name of one of them, which will at all important offerings be made to drink of the beer given to the spirits.[1] Important national offerings, especially supplications for rain, are made at graves of deceased chiefs or the sacred wood in which chiefs are buried. Great importance is attached to objects, especially old beads, hoes, spears that have once belonged to the ancestors. These are handed down from generation to generation, are placed beside the shrine when an offering is made or may even be used instead of a shrine in a beer offering. Old beads are peculiarly important for ensuring the health of any one wearing them and are used in the curing of many illnesses caused by neglect of ancestors. Sacred drums are to be found in every tribe; these are the *komana* drums, thought to be inextricably bound up with the welfare of the tribe as a whole. Among the more southerly tribes of the area, these drums are smeared with the first-fruits when the chief eats the first-fruits, beaten on all important occasions such as the harvest offering and pierced on the death of the chief.

The officiator in important offerings is generally the father's sister or, if she be dead, the eldest sister in the family; but if she lives too far away the head of the family himself may officiate. In general, the officiator calls on ancestors both on his father's and on his mother's side and there may even be two shrines, side by side, one for the father's line, one for the mother's. There is no evidence of any differentiation between the four lines of grandparents to the exclusion

[1] The Venda pour the beer on the beast.

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of the lines of the father's mother and mother's father, such as is mentioned by Stayt for the Venda. The complete absence of any awe or reverence when the Bantu approach their ancestors is seen in the loud talk, jokes and laughter of all except the officiators themselves, and the discussions that frequently take place between the officiator and his neighbours in the middle of proceedings as to what he should do next and how he should do it. As is the case with Europeans, some families are more religious than others, and the very human tendency to forget the gods when things go well is well marked. Some people are always giving to the gods, telling them of all important happenings in the family, giving them a share of any beer that arrives at the kraal, asking their blessings; others forget to perform even the harvest thanksgiving and, unless illness or other trouble comes to show the anger of the ancestors, years may elapse without any religious ceremony taking place.

THE DOCTOR. No religious ceremony of any importance takes place without the co-operation and advice of the doctor; indeed the majority of offerings that are made are done on the advice of the doctor, who determines in every case all such details as which charms are to be used, whether any special relatives have to be present, what if any beads are to play a part. The great doctor is a figure of inter-tribal importance; he works not in one tribe but in many, a fact which largely accounts for the uniformity in the religious practices of different tribes, in contrast to the diversity found in any one tribe. All doctors are not, however, of the same importance. The herbalist, of whom there are hundreds, both male and female, has a limited sphere. He has inherited from his parents or some other relative, often, in the case of a woman, from her husband, one or more medicines or type of medical treatment such as the cutting of veins for blood-letting and a cure for epilepsy, and this he dispenses to all who come.

The doctor, *par excellence*, is the bone-thrower who combines with his divining an extensive knowledge of medicine. There is nothing spectacular about the Sotho doctor; he wears no special or distinguishing dress; his methods are not directed to securing any dramatic effects. Unlike the doctor in Zulu–Xhosa society who is called to his profession by the spirits, undergoes a long period of *ukutwasa* during

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was not announced for a year, while, as the body decomposed, such vital ingredients of the rain-medicine as the skin and body-dirt were carefully collected; after the announcement a period of anarchy often supervened as rival claimants marshalled their armed forces for the struggle for the throne. At the end of this year of mourning all the fires of the country were put out with purificatory rain-medicine (*mufugo*) from the official keeper at the capital.

This fire rite symbolizes purification of the country as well as a transition from one order to another. At any time when the country is not right (*naha a e loge*), as when there is severe drought, the fires are put out 'to usher in a new year' (i.e. a new order or period of operative forces). But the fire rite also symbolizes the means through which the allegiance of subjects and the authority of the queen are asserted. Finally, the beating out of the fires with cooling medicine is part of a complex of practices connected with heat and cold, symbolizing respectively dysphoria and euphoria. The 'earth is hot' (*mavu a fesa*) on the death of the queen and a new cosmic order has to be inaugurated by cooling it in preparation for the new rain-maker.

After the fire rite there follows the divine identification of the successor by the rite of opening the door. The rival claimants, one of whom, chosen by the inner royal council and the deceased queen, has been secretly prepared for his office, pass the hut in which the queen has died. They announce their identity to the spirit of the deceased, lightly touching the door of the hut, which yields to the chosen successor.

In and around the inner secret council where the choice is actually made centre serious tensions, not only between the present ruler and the heir-elect for whose sake and succession she must poison herself, apparently not always willingly, but also between those who depend for their position and prestige upon the patronage of one or the other. The 'chosen' heir always goes to live far away, ostensibly to conceal his or her identity but in reality also owing to a serious conflict with the reigning sovereign.[1]

For the regulation of cosmic forces the queen relies not only on her divinity but also upon the royal rain-medicines and, in the last resort, on the agreement of the royal ancestor spirits. To prevent the weakening of the rain-medicine it must be revitalized by being given the first termites and first-fruits each year, and occasionally parts of a black sheep or, in the old days, a human being.

Rain-charms are liable to weaken (*figehela*) or become defiled (*khuma*) by certain deviations from the normal course of nature unless special precautions are taken. Twins, babies cutting their upper teeth before their lower, women dying in pregnancy, abortions and miscarriages, men dying from *dere*, a deadly coughing disease believed to be contracted by having sex intercourse with a woman who has had a miscarriage or abortion or whose child has died before weaning—all these are deviations which contaminate the earth, causing it to be 'hot', and therefore have to be buried in wet soil or

[1] Males are not debarred from succession; indeed the early rulers were all men. But a definite preference for women rulers seems now to be firmly established.